



July 3, 2021

Dear Fellow Marylanders:

This will be a very different July Fourth weekend than a year ago. As Maryland and many parts of our nation cautiously emerge from the worst days of the COVID-19 pandemic, you likely will see more [community-based events](#), local parades and even neighborhood barbeques.

For those who have been vaccinated against COVID-19, you will be able to enjoy more of these activities and family or friend [reunions](#). For those who have not been vaccinated, unless you cannot do so for medical reasons, I encourage you to [get your shot](#) as soon as possible. More than [70 percent of Maryland adults](#) have been vaccinated so far, which means our communities are safer and those hugs with the grandkids or quiet dinners at your favorite dining spot can resume with more confidence.

While we search for this new “normal,” the threat from this pandemic goes on. The [Delta variant](#) of COVID-19, first detected in India and now present in Maryland, across the U.S., and in 85 countries, continues to spread particularly among communities with low vaccination rates. As this variant is [highly transmissible](#), Marylanders in communities with lower vaccination rates, or those traveling to states with lower vaccination rates, should continue to wear a mask more frequently. This is most important in crowded, indoor settings to prevent continued spread among our family, friends, and neighbors.

This year will be a very different holiday not only because of COVID-19. Throughout our history, Americans have celebrated the Fourth of July as an annual recognition of our independence from tyranny, our fight for freedom, and the eventual establishment of the democracy we are today. Yet this year, we must commemorate our independence with an asterisk, a present reminder of the perils our republic faces today.

The U.S. Capitol is an awe-inspiring building. People [around the world](#) view it as the epicenter of our American democracy. After watching the halls of the Capitol become flooded on January 6 by domestic terrorists who were looking to overturn a free and fair election, the message could not be any clearer. The democracy that built this nation is under attack in a way that no American has ever witnessed in our lifetimes. We must act now to protect the institutions that make the United States the shining citadel and bulwark of democracy and freedom worldwide.

In many states, legislatures and governors have responded to the falsehoods of the 2020 election by restricting voting accessibility. [Around the country](#), millions of Americans are being inappropriately deprived of their constitutional right to vote. The importance of the vote for the survival of our democracy cannot be overstated. [President Lyndon B. Johnson](#) put it well when he said, “This right to vote is the basic right without which all others are meaningless. It gives people, people as individuals, control over their own destinies.”

With Johnson’s words in mind, it is infuriating to witness millions of Americans be deprived of their right to vote. Within the first months of this year, 28 states enacted [over 100 bills](#) aimed at restricting access to the ballot box. These laws actively deny voters – especially minority voters – from participating in our democracy, undermining the foundations of the democratic society we have tirelessly worked to build for generations.

Further undermining our democracy, in late June, all 50 Republican senators blocked us from proceeding to the “[For the People Act](#)” (S.1). Putting gridlock and partisanship before the rights of voters, they refused to even allow us to start debate on this important bill to improve voting rights and accessibility for the whole country. The Senate is being blocked from having the chance to consider options and amendments and do what the Founding Fathers intended it to do: Legislate.

The need for federal voting rights protection grew more urgent this week as the conservative majority on the [Supreme Court](#) upheld some of the most egregious of laws coming from Arizona. This partisan ruling most certainly will disenfranchise thousands of eligible voters, which is exactly the intent.

I am hopeful that the Senate will find a way to move forward the For the People Act, as well as the [John Lewis Voting Rights Act](#), both of which will do much to restore the right to vote across our nation and live up to Johnson’s words by ensuring voting as a ‘basic right’ for all Americans.

As the July Fourth holiday approaches, I encourage you to join me in reflecting on the state of our democracy and the rights we hold dear. A [blatant attempt](#) to falsify an election and persistent efforts to deny the American people access to the ballot box have eroded American democracy to a dangerous level and undermined the freedom and liberty that so many Americans have fought to defend and advance.

This Independence Day, I implore everyone to come together, as past generations have over the last 245 years, and work once again to fight for the [preservation of American democracy](#).

Stay safe. [Enjoy this holiday weekend](#). Thank you for your time.



Ben Cardin